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ABSTRACT

Predicated on the fact that the National Teacher Examination (NTE) is a sociocultural artifact, this paper emphasizes teacher education curricula as a basis for the NTE. The focus is on the social dynamics of the classroom, which is a complex set of interactions far richer than the particularistic bits of information tested by the NTE. Proponents of the NTE must struggle with the inadequacies of teacher education as well as with negative attitudes toward the testing of teacher effectiveness. Six options are suggested in this paper with the intent to push the NTE into fundamental changes, requiring major modification in the philosophy, content, format, norming and marketing strategies related to the NTE. These options include: (1) a problem-solving approach, (2) a heavy emphasis on value and ethical situations, (3) nationally and locally normed versions of the test, (4) generic test items rather than elemmentary and secondary versions of the exam, (5) blending subject area and pedagogical content throughout the exam, and (6) utilizing electronic technology to the fullest. In some ways, the options suggested have as much to do with marketing the NTE as with test protocols. This interrelationship illustrates why this paper discusses the NTE in a social context. (PN)

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The Future of the National Teacher Examination

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Introduction

Sociologist Pitirim Sorokin wrote an insightful volume near the end of his career titled Fads and Foibles in Modern Sociology.[1] Sorokin examined the state of his discipline and his chapter on "Testomania" is germane to an understanding of the National Teachers Examination. Sorokin describes the slavish adherence to the power of testing that has developed in the western world. Whether it be culling persons for jobs, assessing personalities, sorting marriage partners, or any other human interaction, some test exists or will be developed given a market. Worse, tests are used to make life-decisions. Educators are prime examples of the allegiance to tests and the decisions that follow.

This effort to map a future for the NTE is predicated on the fact that the examination is a sociocultural artifact. It is part of a cultural matrix of beliefs and practices that make up the world of testing. It is but one example of the testomania aptly dubbed by Sorokin. The examination has a history and reputation. Changes in the examination can only be perceived in light of that history and reputation. This paper is both critical and

supportive of the testing movement and some inconsistencies in reasoning are inevitable. They are inconsistencies inherent in a dilemma, a means-end debate that permeates the ideas offered.

Of the four guidelines suggested for mapping papers, this paper emphasizes teacher education curricula as a basis for the NTE. Specific characteristics of good teaching are not highlighted. Instead, the focus is on Durkheim's dictum that "education is an eminently social thing."[2] It is in the social dynamics of the classroom that teaching takes its amorphous, shifting form. A complex set of interactions, far richer than the particularistic bits of information tested, are the essence of teaching. If we have learned anything from research, it is that listings of teacher behaviors are not necessarily conducive to understanding the teaching act. Test items based on specific skills will not reveal the nuances of effective teaching. It is in socio-psychological interactions between teachers and students that effectiveness may be found. It is <u>how</u> the teacher uses skills that determine effectiveness rather than the behavior itself. The homily "It ain't what you do but the way that you do it" is perhaps the best exposition of this point.

Changing items on the examination will not improve the NTE other than in a narrow technical sense. Basing items on research findings is, of course, a positive step. But even

that goal is very limited unless the examination focuses on the social dynamics suggested above. It is the philosophy undergirding the examination that needs analysis. The context within which the NTE operates in American education also needs probing. Perceptions of the exam are as critical to the NTE's future as its research base.

Any sound examination is predicated on the assumption that there is a body of knowledge that can be examined. In the world of teacher education this is not a safe assumption. Hence, the NTE is predicated on an exceptionally shaky foundation. A reminiscence may clarify this view.

I was not required to take the examination as a teacher. In later years, as a fresh college instructor, I learned that colleagues wrote NTE questions and were paid for questions submitted. This practice concerned me. Students far distant from these instructors would take the examination. They would be graded and sorted with no contact with the persons writing the questions. The gap between the examination and the content of the preparation process was obvious and odious.

I knew that the bank of questions was sifted so that usable questions represented a consensus on facts new teachers ought to know. This rational procedure did not diminish my negative reaction. I believed then and still contend that the ideal examination is directly related to instruction.

It should be based on learning experiences guided by teachers who compose the examination. Allegiance to this view causes me to be skeptical of the NTE and even of college departmental examinations.

I note this anecdote so that my bias is explicit. Despite this prejudice, I accept the NTE as an honest attempt to codify knowledge about teaching. However skillfully polished, the examination is inevitably flawed. It stands precariously on the loose sands of testing procedures far removed from the learning of that knowledge. Persons taking the examination respond to questions and situations they may not have experienced during their training. This is the NTE's basic weakness and one reason to view it skeptically. One response to this criticism is that all standardized examinations are developed in a similar fashion. This is not a defense, however. It only exemplifies the virulence of testomania.

Despite my bias, I support the NTE. My dilemma is clear: I have severe reservations about the testing movement; but I am even more concerned about the quality of teacher preparation. Because of these conflicting values, I am convinced those who would reform teacher education must support the NTE. Examinations of this type can help to accelerate needed reforms. The NTE is a public and reasonably objective way of addressing the haphazard process called teacher preparation. I support the NTE because that process must be challenged.

The examination is a means to a more fundamental end: strengthening the quality of teacher education.

Finally, I enter the debate regarding the future of the NTE denovo. My assertions may not be germane to the more technical expectations specified for such essays. If that is the case, it is because I am an outsider to the world of testing. My perceptions are those of a practicing teacher educator whose work has been at some variance with the testing movement.

My personal position is unimportant given other pervasive attitudes toward the NTE. Examining several of those attitudes is critical to projecting the examination's future.

Attitudes Toward the NTE

In recent years, the NTE gained notoriety because it has been used to sort new teaching candidates as well as persons already in the teaching ranks. Reactions to the latter usage are predictable and the NTE has responded to instances of inappropriate usage. How any examination is interpreted is determined by the profession, legislatures and the public rather than by a testing firm. The fact that the interpretation is not professionally sound only heightens the negative impact.

Fallout from negative uses of the NTE influenced a major decision in Oklahoma. The State has passed legislation which requires college students to pass examinations in their subject areas prior to graduation. As an advocate

of that legislation, it is my perception that the NTE was suggested as an instrument appropriate for purposes specified in the legislation. Most voices, however, did not support the NTE because of its usage in other states. The teaching profession by and large views the NTE as an anathema. It was determined, therefore, that examinations unique to Oklahoma would be developed, and that technical assistance would come from a firm other than ETS. I note this scenerio for it underscores a broadly based negative view of the NTE. That view is related far more to how the examination is used than to any intrinsic demerits in the examination. Planning a future of the NTE must take this social fact into account. Mere technical improvements in the exam will not alter this attitude.

The problem is deeper than one of negative attitudes. It is linked to the morass of debate on behaviors that define good teaching. The lack of concensus on teacher performance competencies weakens any hope that the NTE will be accepted by the profession. There is no need to review the history of the competency based movement. Its rise and fall and residual impact is a familiar story. The failure of the movement provides insight into the essence of teacher education. A profession that cannot agree on broad categories of competence with which persons should graduate is at a low level of sophistication. One consequence of this fact is a distrust of any examination that purports to assess competencies.

Still another negative view of the NTE is predicated on the monies earned by ETS. I cannot debate the validity of charges that ETS is monstrously wealthy. The distrust of the testing industry is real, however. It is not a matter of facts and figures. It is rather a view toward testing services and their motivation pervasive in schools and colleges. The goal of the NTE is to make a profit, of course, and its market is threatened by attitudes that reject the testing of teachers. The NTE has to determine the degree to which professional assessment goals and profit making goals are consistent. My assumption is that debate on such matters is heard within NTE and ETS councils. I have no idea who is winning the debate. In my view, the NTE staff must determine which is the highest priority: strengthening the profession or making a profit. Perhaps they are incompatable goals. My values dictate the former choice and it is offered for what it is worth--which may not be much on a ledger sheet.

Despite negative reactions within the teaching profession, there is powerful support for testing prospective teachers. Many legislators and segments of the public have lost confidence in the ability of schools of education to guarantee the skill level of teachers. The informed public knows it needs protection for its children and that certification processes do not guarantee such protection. Since other professions utilize examinations at the point of entry, the demand for similar examinations of teachers has increased.

These are not new issues. The NTE would not exist if the need for some type of national examination had not existed for generations.

Given some decline of public confidence in the ability of schools to educate well, it can be expected that demands for testing teachers will increase. This is the major reason that the future of the NTE is a social-political problem rather than an assessment problem. The NTE's future will not be determined by the adequacy of the research base for its questions. It may have a positive future because this is a period when demands for such examinations are on the increase. Significantly, few voices among teacher educators support this trend.

Within schools of education, reactions to the NTE or state-developed examinations are mixed. Some teacher educators oppose any examination that attempts to assess the impact of teacher training. They fear the inevitable comparisons between campuses as test results are made public. Other teacher educators insist that teaching is too complex to be reduced to a paper and pencil assessment. The former argument is self-serving and the latter has some power. Lost in the debate is a higher order of social need: the public must have guarantees regarding the quality of teacher preparation. The rights of the public and of school children are more important than any embarrassment felt by teacher educators.

Despite that need, there is little support from teacher education for the NTE or other state mandated tests. The

majority of teacher educators view the NTE as a threat to be avoided. Professionals in any field are seldom supportive of their own reform. It is expected, therefore, that this resistance to the NTE will continue. It is precisely because of that resistance that the NTE is needed at this juncture in teacher education's history. The quality of teacher preparation must be dramatically increased. Past practices are far too loose to continue. Unfortunately, the ranks of reformers are thin and fear-motivated attitudes constitute the norms of the profession.

This summary of attitudes toward the NTE is sufficient to suggest the social milieu in which decisions are made regarding the test. Proponents of the NTE must struggle with the inadequacies of teacher education as well as with negative attitudes. Despite this context, the examination is a rational attempt to predicate assessment of the best available research. It is a step toward identifying common elements in teacher preparation. Citing the weaknesses and overall low reputation of the NTE does not denigrate those strengths. The struggle is all uphill, however. Some additional comments on teacher education may better outline the parameters of the struggle.

The World of Teacher Education

Teacher training includes practices that range from "moderately rigorous" to "once-over-lightly," with the latter characterization being the norm. There is no cohesive knowledge base on which teacher educators agree. There is no unified research base on which they build their programs.

A conventional wisdom of teacher preparation exists, but its implementation is fragmented. A patchwork approach has been codified into a handful of courses culminating in student teaching, thus providing a framework within which something will be taught. A range of values relative to the content and quality of teacher education act as powerful intervening variables on that framework. As a result, and not always with justification, teacher education is low on the pantheon of professional training programs. What is taught in this structure may indeed be tested, but the examination based on such fragmentation is suspect.

Despite bright spots, teacher training apparently does not dramatically influence the behavior of teachers. It has some influence, of course, since most experiences have an impact on behavior. It does not have a powerful impact, however. In Lortie's view, teacher training does not call for the degree of sacrifice sufficient to develop a commitment to the profession.[3] Teacher training is far more a funnelling than a training process. The preparation process is not sufficiently intensive to guarantee the internalization of professional level behaviors. Teacher preparation is a great sieve with the holes representing compromises made in the process. While it carries little water, it is

amazing the process works as well as it does to sort persons for the profession.*

It is because of the fragmented nature of teacher education that the NTE's future is a sociopolitical problem rather than one to be resolved by research on the teaching/learning process. There are no compelling reasons to predict that educational research will have any more impact on the quality of education in the next 20 years than it has had over the past two decades. I wish the trend lines were otherwise, but they are not. Teaching and everything associated with it--including the quality of schools of education--is seldom a research/scholarly based endeavor. Indeed, anti-intellectualism on campuses and in public schools is a far more powerful force.

This assessment should not be viewed as a retreat from research and scholarship. I merely wish to underscore the complexity of the knot to be untied. On an optimistic note, I would cite one recent effort attacking the lack of a scholarly base in schools of education. A small group of deans disseminated a policy statement on the critical

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*It is important to note that those comments apply to most academic enterprises. Issues of quality and the lack of a research base are not restricted to schools of education. Some teacher preparation programs are models of cohesion when compared to other programs on a campus. While fragmentation of effort is endemic to university structures, professional schools sometimes overcome the rigidity that characterizes the academy.

importance of scholarship as the basis of teacher education.[4] The document was sent to the dean/director of every teacher education program in the nation. The goal of this effort is to replace practices based on conventional wisdom with those supported by scholarly analyses of the teaching/learning process. However long it may take, traditional practices in teacher education must be overcome by those resulting from systematic evaluation processes. There is some hope these goals are taking place, but with glacial slowness. Over the next 15 years, neither teaching or the NTE are likely to be revolutionized. The magnitude of the reforms needed in teacher education, to which NTE can make some contribution, cannot be minimized.

The future of the NTE, therefore, is hindered by the very fact that it is research based. Scholarly values are not the prime movers of the conventional wisdom of the worlds of teaching and teacher education. The fact that some teachers and teacher educators are supportive of research based programs does not mean that those are the norms of the profession. The prevailing norms are exceptionally diffuse and are seldom based on scholarship. One conclusion that could be drawn from this gloomy assessment is that the NTE should surrender to the conventional wisdom of the profession. That is not my argument nor is it the only logical choice. It is equally logical to argue that the NTE can

make a strong contribution to the growth of research based teacher education.

One example of research challenging the conventional wisdom of the field is that focused on time-on-task activities in classrooms.[5] This work is of vital import for it reveals that many teachers spend more time on procedural and organizational matters, attending to behavior in the classroom, than they do on instruction. Even more importantly, students face so many distractions imposed by teachers, peers, and classroom procedures that the time actually spent developing skills tends to be seriously limited. The research is critical because time is one of the fundamental variables in understanding life in classrooms.

The research underscores that which many teacher educators still refuse to recognize. Teaching is fundamentally--and more than in any other profession--a complex social act. It almost always takes place in a group setting. Whether that group has four, twenty, or forty members, all the dynamics of group behavior are constantly at work. The seminal work of Willard Waller revealed many of these dynamics.[6] Ethnographic or observational studies of classroom life such as that by Phillip Jackson[7] reveal the dynamics of human interaction which are often perfuntorily treated in teacher education.

It will be argued that teacher educators deal with these dynamics in clinical and student teaching settings. This is

partially correct. The overall thrust of teacher education is still classroom and campus based, however. Clinical approaches remain the ideal rather than the mode. The NTE tends to be predicated on that which is "covered" by campus instruction. Preachment about teaching rather than the realities faced by teachers is too often the basis for NTE questions. Any hope that future NTE examinations can stress performance and reality factors must be predicated on a reversal of this tradition. The reforms needed in teacher education are slow in coming, however, and it is not easy to muster optimism.

Additional illustrations of classroom life may be useful. How should the teacher deal with disruptions? How many times in a day will someone at the door beckon to the teacher or a child? How does the teacher deal with the bee that wanders in on a spring day? What does a teacher do when a child throws up? When children fight or torment one another?

What of the impact of substitute teachers? When a substitute teacher enters the classroom, student attitudes toward substitutes will determine the outcomes of that day. Those outcomes have little to do with whether the substitute knows about English literature, child growth and development or motivational techniques. Such knowledge is important, but more critical is what the person knows about social interaction: the expectations of students, the role and status

of teachers, and other social/psychological dynamics of classroom life that will determine what happens next. Will the substitute win over the class? Or will it be a debacle? These are situations that need to be addressed in the NTE. They have a reality as critical to teaching success as subject matter knowledge.

Should the examination get at the difference between a.m. and p.m. teaching? Experienced teachers know that teachers and students are fresher and more things are likely to work effectively in the morning hours. What happens when the teacher has the same group all day? What changes in energy, in attitude, in attainment occur at 10:00 a.m. as contrasted to 2:00 p.m.? What of the impact of seasons and temperatures? We know these factors are critical yet we pretend they are not. These are precisely the types of factors that should be examined. Regretfully, there is little systematic research on these factors. Yet, these variables can more powerfully explain classroom life than much of the research on bits of behavior now so common.

Another teacher has been in the field ten years and has the reputation of being a good teacher. What does that mean? Does it mean that the children learn a great deal? Or that the classroom is run efficiently and quietly? Does it mean this teacher is really "turned on" to the subject matter?

Of is this a teacher who fits into the social fabric of the staff, someone well-liked because he/she never challenges the conventional wisdom of peers? Is it someone who takes inservice workshops to earn another dollar or because there are skills to be honed? Is this person an advocate for children? The questions are rhetorical but they are part of the reality on which the NTE should be based.

A major part of that reality is found in the subset of roles played by teachers. As described by Havighurst and Neugarten, these include being a mediator of learning, a judge, a disciplinarian, a parent substitute, a confidante, and a surrogate of middle-class morality.[8] This set of behaviors reveals the day-to-day interactions involving children and teachers wherein something called teaching and learning take place. Teacher educators mainly emphasize sequencing information, cutting and pasting knowledge into bite sizes. So does the NTE. The realities of teaching are quite different. This does not mean that sequencing and age-grade norms are unimportant. These factors are only a minor part of the complex maze of human interactions called teaching, however.

What types of questions could be asked to get at these phenomena? I submit that such situations can be incorporated in the examination and that it is vital that new teachers be

capable of responding to such matters. One response to this line of argument is that the NTE should be predicated exclusively on academic attainment. This is a reasonable argument but it ignores the fact that persons completing teaching preparation have been conditioned by at least sixteen years of schooling. They know what teachers are like. They have lived years in dozens of classrooms and have probably "seen it all." The degree to which they fully comprehended teacher behaviors, no one can predict. But it is reasonable to assume that after sixteen years of schooling, there would be little about the behavior of teachers they have not observed. Acceptance of this assumption has major implications for the focus of the NTE.

Recommendations

If this sketch of teacher education and classroom life is at all accurate, NTE planners should consider a range of implications. The following six recommendations are a start:

1. A Problem-Solving Examination. I recommend that future NTE examinations be entirely problem-solving in nature. The exam should utilize problem solving techniques that outline choices of behavior that are realistic rather than textbookish. Such an examination would come much closer to the complexities of classroom life suggested above. This approach would inevitably lead to including answers that may be the best possible among several poor choices. There will also be choices that are all reasonable. The focus

throughout would of necessity be on matters of professional judgment.

To examine professional judgment, test items need not necessarily always reflect the "right answer." Professional judgment is demonstrated in the application of experience and diagnostic skills in an effort to find the best answer under given circumstances. When an examination is predicated on the theory that only one answer is correct, it will be resisted by persons in the field who know that good answers do not fit all situations. They know from experience that schooling requires making judgments under circumstances often beyond the teacher's control. It is in choosing the best possible behavior that the essence of teaching is found, rather than in the right answer syndrome permeating the world of testing.

Teaching often calls for doing the best possible given a range of unsatisfactory choices. The teacher does not control most of the important variables related to schooling. Age/grade norms are part of the system of schooling. The teacher's impact on these and other variables is very limited. The examination needs to recognize these limitations or it will continue to be viewed as an imposition on an already burdened profession. I do not agree with the NEA's position regarding the NTE, but it is more defensible than the narrow pedagogical/psychological assumptions exhibited by the true-believers in testing.

If the NTE is to have a positive future it must gain the support of teachers and their organizations. This need goes beyond the courtship of NEA or AFT leadership. It means that panels developing exams must include a majority of practicing teachers as well as professionals from the worlds of testing and teacher education. The worlds of testing and of teacher education are not necessarily the same. They coexist but there are major differences in the value orientations of these worlds. Hence, panels should have a tripartite composition. When teachers have parity on NTE panels, test items will be more realistic and reflect some of the conventional wisdom of the field. Despite my distrust of some of that conventional wisdom, it is not necessarily always wrong, as in the case of folk medicine. The involvement of teachers would add more reality to items included, and that is the major goal. Since teachers must constantly live in a world of problem solving, I submit that teachers will be far more supportive of the NTE if it becomes problem-solving in nature.

The major obstacle to a problem solving format is that all of teaching, including the NTE, is dominated by psychological

premises. The NTE is only a small part of the subculture of teaching and psychological bias permeate all aspects of schooling. These biases are narrow and do not reveal life in the classroom. The NTE ought to be predicated on ethnographic analyses of teaching. It is out of such research that a more realistic series of questions will emerge. Ethnography is far more conducive to revealing classroom realities than the particularistic, piecemeal assumptions of psychology. Indeed, ethnographic studies of teacher preparation are vitally needed if there is to be any hope of vitalizing that process.

2. An Emphasis on Values and Ethics. Another option open to the NTE is to focus on value judgments in teaching. One major weakness of the NTE is that it does not deal with ethical issues. Next to the ministry, teaching is the most value-laden professional activity in which one can engage. Teachers make value judgments constantly. They assess the social class and status if students. They determine which acts of behavior will be condoned or rejected. They set expectations to which students may or may not conform.

Assessing values is difficult and fraught with controversy. Yet what is professional behavior and judgment if it is not a system of values? Professional judgment is the very heart of teaching, not the skills or behaviors of the isolated teaching act. One can assume that whatever the technical competence of a professional, it is the person's experience and

judgment that determine the efficacy of those skills. It is not the skills themselves. The fact that a teacher may know something about how children learn to read guarantees nothing in the classroom. It is the judgment with which the teacher applies his/her knowledge that may make the difference.

Professional judgment is conscious judgment. It is predicated on rationality and that is the reason it ought to be given high prominence in the assessment of teaching potential. The NTE ought to be heavily loaded with professional judgment situations. Persons seeking to employ teachers look for evidence that a person has the maturity to take responsibility for the young. Hence, an assessment of the teacher's ability to make judgments is vital. Evidence of such judgment is a major component of professional maturity.

If teachers make ethical and value judgments daily, why is this factor so ignored? Most teacher education programs require a course in the philosophy or history of education. This requirement is based on the assumption that such a course will prepare persons to make or at least control value judgments in the classroom. At best, such courses can raise questions or provide background information on these judgments. They do little to prepare persons for the cauldron in which one's values and ethics are displayed.

The test of values and ethics is in the classroom, in the hallways, on the playground and in the quiet of the night when

incidents are rethought. It is in conflict situations that judgments must often be made, perhaps when teachers are threatened by students. Judgments are made on occasions when academic freedom is put to the test. The drama is enacted in hallways when an angry parent asks a teacher to defend certain practices. It is in these and a hundred other situations that one's value/ethical standards are tested. It is in such situations that the heart of teaching performance will be found. The NTE should examine such situations in some depth.

The new teacher will not have experienced some of these situations. It takes years before one is likely to have experienced a variety of ethical/value testing incidents. At the same time, one can assume that teacher preparation will become more clinical in nature. The trend line is clear and schools of education are expected to have their students in the field more. It is likely that if the NTE includes a series of value testing problems, future students will have had sufficient experience to be able to respond. Even if patterns of preparation remain essentially static, I would not retreat from this proposal. Anytime a person works with another, in tutoring, student teaching or actual teaching situations, value and ethical issues come to fore. The sooner persons preparing for teaching confront and examine those values, the better for the person and the profession.

There is little justification in the literature for the inclusion of a strong ethical/value theme in the NTE. I am unaware of empirical research supportive of this recommendation. Consensual validation is hardly persuasive. For a profession overwhelmingly value-laden, it is remarkable how little attention is paid to ethics and values. If ethical and value issues are given a more prominent role in the NTE, that decision needs to be made on a basis other than empirical research or consensual validation. It must be made on the conviction that values permeate all teaching behaviors.

Reactions to such a decision will not be positive. Given the "passing through" phenomenon entrenched in teacher education, i.e., virtually all persons admitted will be certified, many teacher educators have demonstrated they are unwilling to deal with ethical/value issues in their assessment processes. Hard battles were fought to get teacher education to react to disadvantagement in the 60's. Similar battles are underway in respect to multicultural content. These examples are both value laden in origin and implementation. Putting it most bluntly, most teacher educators do not respond to social issues for doing so requires taking a value/ethical stance. This is a damning statement and hopefully overgeneralized. Nonetheless, it is the premise from which this recommendation derives.

3. National and Local Norms. Another approach that may be useful is to determine the degree to which the NTE can be nationally-normed and state-normed. The Oklahoma situation

noted earlier is something I suspect will happen in other states. The NTE may be rejected because persons fear how a given state will fare compared to national norms. Even if some individuals support the testing of teachers, they will argue for state developed tests. The decision before NTE is if it should fight or capitalize on this trend. The NTE staff might develop an examination that is both nationally and state normed. Such an option is only possible if a given state department of education would contract with NTE for such a service. How reasonable this suggestion may be, I have no way of knowing. It is an option that might be worthy of further study.

4. The Elementary/Secondary Trap. Another critical decision is related to differentiated examinations for secondary and elementary teachers. Creating such exams would support the traditional wisdom that insists that these two levels of teaching are dramatically different. Some even argue that there are critical distinctions between elementary, middle school (junior high) and secondary teachers, calling for a tripartite division of all training programs. In this instance, the conventional wisdom is wrong. The fact that age/grade levels of schooling exist is developed into a system of reasoning which, tautologically, concludes that teachers must be different at each level.

More objective observations of teaching show it to be remarkably consistent at all levels. All teachers perform

tasks and carry responsibilities that are variations on themes rather than behaviors unique to age/grade settings. It is self-evident that teaching will vary according to the maturation level of the children involved. The fact that techniques are varied from grade to grade in no way means that the teaching act is categorically different at each level, despite the conventional wisdom that preaches otherwise. It could even be argued that there will be more differences in teacher behaviors within an elementary school faculty than between that group and a high school faculty.

The NTE will provide a great service to the profession by maintaining a generic approach. Anything that can be done to weaken the double-standard applied to elementary and secondary teachers should be encouraged. The exam should be predicated on the premise that good teaching characteristics are not unique to the grade level or subject area taught. The focus should be on generic characteristics related to the intellectual power of individuals, attitudes toward children, their knowledge of growth and development, teaching and evaluation skills, and an understanding of the value and ethical considerations enacted in all classroom interactions. These latter characteristics are far more powerful than the relatively minor differences between elementary and secondary teaching.

While future preparation programs should be constant regardless of the grade level with whom persons work, at this stage in the history of teacher preparation discrete elementary and secondary programs are at least understandable. They are

separate because college programs sort persons for positions rather than rigorously preparing them to exercise professional judgment. Training programs are not intensive and do not develop a strong commitment to teaching as a fundamental characteristic of all teachers. The preparation process is so superficial that what little contact exists between colleges and schools should be at the level at which one will be certified. When the process is more demanding over a longer period of time, future teachers will have extensive experience with children at all grade levels. The level at which they chose to work will then be a matter of preference or of job opportunity rather than the result of a narrow, funneling process.

I would underscore that the NTE will make a major contribution to the improvement of the teaching profession by emphasizing generic skills and characteristics. To do otherwise will perpetuate practices that have created the fragmentation that so weakens teaching.

5. Content and Pedagogy. In respect to the general education component, it could be argued that persons have already demonstrated subject matter learning as evidenced by transcripts and grades. Why, then, should the NTE include tests of subject matter competence? The answers are obvious. Such exams are "objective" and focus on traditional clusters

of knowledge. Colleges vary on the emphasis they give to subject matter areas. Further, given the grade inflation race, transcripts are no longer very convincing evidence of competence. In schools of education, for example, grades of "A" and "B" are so common that there is little confidence they differentiate between levels of competency. It is for these reasons that the NTE will likely remain divided into subject area and pedagogical components. There is an alternative, however: blending pedagogy and subject areas.

The NTE should determine the degree to which it will perpetuate the schism between subject matter and pedagogy. The compleat teacher knows and respects subject matter and how to be a mediator between that knowledge and students. The teacher knows how to involve students and to evaluate all aspects of that process. The NTE ought to, therefore, blend pedagogical and subject matter components. Rather then having separate sections of the examination, they could be integrated tnroughout. By doing so, the future science teacher would be concurrently tested on science knowledge as well as on insights into how that knowledge can be transmitted in the classroom.

Such an approach would help heal the schism between content and method, at least on paper. It would contribute to a far more realistic understanding of the teaching act. The teacher

must constantly blend pedagogy and subject matter. The NTE should not reinforce the traditional view that one is more important than the other.

6. Electronic Technology. The NTE is often attacked with justification for its paper and pencil format. To those who argue that paper and pencil tests cannot possibly assess teaching skills, at least one sardonic answer is possible. Persons making the point usually use paper and pencil examinations in their own classrooms. Why the traditional format is less reprehensive in one's own classroom is not clear. A better retort is in the fact that new technology makes it possible for examinations not to be restricted to paper and pencil exercises.

It has been suggested that tapes of classroom performance could be part of NTE's brave new world. Video discs or tapes of teaching submitted by students should not, in my judgment, be part of an NTE assessment. Such analyses are the responsibility of superintendents and other hiring officials. They are also a responsibility of teacher associations who must become far more active in the assessment of peer performance. Tapes or discs may someday be presented by teacher candidates as part of a portfolio of evidence that they have attained certain skill levels. Such tapes could be nationally normed but the logistical problems in assessing such behaviors by

panels of experts are formidable. The NTE could make a contribution to this goal by developing models for the assessment of video tapes. Research on such models exists and further discussion is not necessary other than to cite this as an option before the NTE.

The use of minicomputers, on the other hand, is a powerful tool for future NTE test procedures. These instruments make it possible for the NTE to become far more flexible and interesting than paper and pencil formats. It is already possible for the NTE to be computerized and for testing stations to include banks of reasonably priced minicomputers. These devices can greatly enhance the examination process. They can be utilized with other media so that the problem solving approach urged here can include film, audio and video clips.

It is only reasonable to expect that a generation raised on Atari games and Space Invaders will respond positively to similar testing formats. In a McLuhanesque sense, probing teaching competence must be fast paced, with many variables to be considered. The message of paper and pencil formats is one of slow, thoughtful comtemplation. The reality of classroom decision making is often hectic. Electronic technology permits a bridging of the two approaches.

Summary

This discussion has outlined choices before the NTE staff. The choices may not be viable within the context of the ETS/NTE corporate philosophy, the traditional wisdom of

the testing world, resources available for major innovations, or other factors of which I am not privy. Given the pace of change in all phases of education, it is safe to conclude that the NTE will remain essentially unchanged over the next decade save in cosmetic ways. Questions can be related to emerging research and protocols can be revised. The odds favor the philosophy, structure and content of the exam remaining the same despite what may appear to be new thrusts. Sarason's assertion that the more things change, the more they remain the same explains as much as it obscures.[9] True change would require major modification in the philosophy, content, format, norming, and marketing strategies related to the NTE. Unless changes fundamentally influence all these components, the NTE will remain essentially the same no matter how many new items are included.

The options suggested in this paper are intended to push the NTE into more fundamental changes. These options offer a positive future for they may counter negative attitudes toward the examination. These options include: (1) a problem-solving approach; (2) a heavy emphasis on value and ethical situations; (3) nationally and locally normed versions of the test; (4) generic test items rather than elementary and secondary versions of the exam; (5) blending subject area and pedagogical content throughout the exam; and (6) utilizing electronic technology to the fullest.

No one of these or any other option will make a major difference. When several major options are implemented, all the assumptions and procedures that now undergird the NTE will be challenged and the attitudes of the broader profession toward the NTE may thus be influenced. In some ways, the options suggested have as much to do with marketing the NTE as with test protocols. The two factors are interrelated, of course, and illustrate again why the social context in which the NTE exists has been the theme of this paper.

The NTE can have a positive future if it is predicated on the realities of teaching and teacher education. I have only touched on some of those realities. Enough has been offered to emphasize that the NTE's future should be predicated on the involvement of teacher educators and classroom teachers who are capable of dealing with the realities of teaching, rather than those who would perpetuate the fragmented, particularistic items that characterize the examination and the profession.

This then is the major choice before the NTE staff: should it side with the reformers in the profession or with those who represent the conventional wisdom of teaching and the testing world? It is not an easy or even a realistic choice given that the NTE is a product to be sold. One can conclude, therefore, that the current test is as good as the state of the profession at this time, and that is not a comforting thought.

My hope is that the NTE will become far more reality based and perhaps more acceptable to teachers. I also hope it begins to reflect ethnographic research that goes far beyond the limited insights of most educational research. A sound reality based NTE would help set standards now too often winked in the preparation process.

This discussion may provide a framework within which other mapping recommendations may fit. I do not presume that these thoughts comprise the only useful context. Defining a context, however, is vital to charting a future for the NTE.